

Narrator:

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The earthquake in Haiti has generated assistance efforts not only from the U.S. government, but also calls for donations from the American public as they join with efforts around the world to mobilize rescue and relief for the Haitian people.

President Obama said the earthquake is a reminder “of the common humanity that we all share.” He urged Americans to contribute to assistance efforts in spite of tough economic times. “For a country and a people who are no strangers to hardship and suffering, this tragedy seems especially cruel and incomprehensible,” the president said. The president also encouraged the families of Americans living in Haiti to contact the State Department Operations Center at 888-407-4747 as they try to learn the whereabouts and well-being of their loved ones.

Obama has directed the United States, under the coordination of U.S. Agency for International Development Administrator Dr. Rajiv Shah, to “respond with a swift, coordinated and aggressive effort to save lives.” Disaster response personnel from USAID, the U.S. military’s Southern Command, urban search-and-rescue teams from Virginia and California, and other American personnel will be working closely with their counterparts from Haiti and other countries, the United Nations and nongovernmental organizations.

The president said this must truly be an international effort. In addition to the Obama administration’s efforts to encourage private donations for Haiti, United Nations Foundation Founder and Chairman Ted Turner announced January 13th that his organization is committing \$1 million to address Haiti's most urgent humanitarian and reconstruction needs. Turner urged additional donor support through the United Nations Central Emergency Response Fund Web site. Turner said the fund has released \$10 million, and along with quick action from U.N. agencies in coordination with parties on the ground in Haiti, those actions are “vital in preventing even further loss of life.”

Although the U.S. government is the single largest donor of foreign economic aid, many Americans often prefer to donate their money through the private sector, and those funds often outpace official U.S. government efforts.